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Cultural Landscapes and Protected Areas

New Partnership Opportunities in Micronesia

The preservation of cultural resources is the broad mission of historic preservation officers (HPOs) in the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. These three nations are jointly referred to as the Freely Associated States of Micronesia. "Free Association" describes their continuing relationship with the U.S. following termination of their dependent status under the former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI).

The United Nations formally established the U.S. trusteeship in Micronesia in 1947 after the World War II capture of the islands by the U.S. Individual "Compacts of Free Association" with the U.S. provide each of the Freely Associated States with vital access to the U.S. Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) by authority of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.[1]

Historic Preservation in Micronesia

Since 1974, the HPF has been the primary source of funds for government sponsored preservation work in Micronesia. It provides critical support for a variety of projects ranging from the development of national resource inventories and preservation legislation, to village-based restorations of traditional sites and the audio-visual documentation of traditional practices.

The Freely Associated States also contribute limited funding for preservation, and local communities provide much in the way of labor and resources in kind. The importance of traditional heritage and identity is reflected in the constitutions of both the FSM and Palau, while the Marshall Islands have perhaps the most comprehensive preservation legislation of the three nations.

From 1974 to 1985, the annual HPF grants administered by the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) were given to the Territorial Historic Preservation Office, which conducted archeological and historical projects throughout the TTPI. Much of that work was documented by the Micronesian Archaeological Survey report series (MAS) published by the former TTPI Historic Preservation Office and now published by the Historic Preservation Division of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The TTPI Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service nominated 33 sites to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places, five of which were listed as U.S. National Historic Landmarks. Most of these properties, like the German-era deBrum House on Likiep Atoll in the Marshall Islands and the Japanese Artillery Road on Pohnpei in the FSM, represent colonial history. There are notable exceptions though; for example, the megalithic residential complex of Leluh on Kosrae and the carved stone monoliths of Melekeok in Palau.

From 1986 to the present, the NPS has awarded individual HPF grants to each of the Freely Associated States and has helped to develop their historic preservation offices. With one-time additional funds from Congress, NPS and the Micronesian Endowment for Historic Preservation cooperated to carry out the Micronesian Resources Study (MRS). The MRS was designed to inventory archeological and ethnographic resources and to provide training and material support to the new historic preservation offices. The 11 volume MRS report series published by NPS documented these projects.

NPS also monitors grant activities and provides limited training in archeology, ethnography and grant administration. It ensures that at least one historic preservation staff member of each nation, typically an archeologist, meets the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's professional qualification standards.[2] Palau currently has one cultural anthropologist as well as an archeologist. Under

the general supervision of their HPOs, paraprofessional staff work closely with their archeologist or cultural anthropologist. In the FSM the paraprofessional staff work independently most of the time since the archeologist must rotate among each of the four states of Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk (Truk), and Yap. In addition to the FSM national historic preservation officer, each of the four FSM states has its own state HPO. National and state HPOs also cooperate with and monitor outside researchers.

Threats to cultural resources vary with their materials and geography. Singly or in combination they include but are not limited to land-altering developments; vandalism; neglect by owners; and deconstruction by natural forces such as tropical storms, oxidation, rot, and powerful tree roots and vines.

With few exceptions HPF projects and activities have not been designed to support the creation of parks or protected areas for cultural resources. Traditional culture as represented by individual archeological and ethnographic sites, and traditional practices are still the primary foci of HPOs. Recently there has been interest in trying to develop projects that document and preserve traditional cultural landscapes (explained below) and to make them accessible to tourists within a context of sustainable heritage tourism. As will be discussed, pursuit of this strategy may lead to partnership opportunities to enhance and broaden cultural resource preservation and better integrate it within the economies of local communities.

Landscape Conservation and Management

The Micronesian islands do not represent unmodified natural environments. The voyaging agriculturist ancestors of the current populations first settled Micronesia approximately 2,000 years ago and earlier. As a result, the settled islands have long been culturally managed for food and materials production and there are few untouched areas. With initial colonization:

> The modification of island ecosystems began in earnest as native forests were cleared to make way for root-crop gardens and for orchards of tree-crops [and also living spaces]. …Under conditions of low population density it is possible for forests to regenerate but more often than not the cleared land is gardened repeatedly and a highly transformed "second growth" vegetation comes to replace the original rainforest.[3]

Later colonization by Europeans and Asians in the 19th and 20th centuries further altered the ecology of some islands by emphasizing the production of copra (dried coconut meat); logging the inland hardwood stands and coastal mangrove forests; and removing large amounts of beach sand to make concrete. World War II and pre-war militarization also affected a number of islands. Consequently, the inhabited islands exhibit a variety of culturally modified landscapes (cultural landscapes).

In documenting historically significant cultural landscapes in the U.S., the NPS typically includes the following kinds of material components: circulation networks (e.g., paths); boundary demarcations (e.g., walls, streams, and ridges); vegetation related to land use (e.g., crops and trees); buildings, structures and objects; archeological sites; and small-scale elements (e.g., rock cairn trail markers). Evident processes affecting the landscape such as land use, spatial organization, related cultural traditions and response to the natural environment are also documented.[4] This kind of scheme can be implemented at different levels of detail and need not be very intrusive into secret knowledge or histories sometimes associated with traditional culture sites.

In Micronesia, the use and management of landscapes take place within a context of agroforestry. Agroforestry may be defined as:

> …a sustainable land-management system which increases the overall yield of the land, combines the production of crops (including tree crops) and forest plants and/or animals simultaneously or sequentially, on the same unit of land, and applies management practices that are compatible with the cultural practices of the local population.[5]

Agroforestry and fishing constitute the backbone of local subsistence economies in the Freely Associated States. Although patterns and rules of ownership are changing, traditional systems of land tenure still predominate, and are complex. For example on Yap:

> Land ownership involved multiple rights of use and one piece of land might belong to one person but be subject to the consent of another, be lived on by a third, and harvested by a fourth party. This complex system of land control resulted in considerable diversity in management while preventing widespread changes to large pieces of land.[6]

Loal Village canoe landing site, Kosrae, Federated States of Micronesia. This site is located at the edge of a mangrove forest and is part of a cultural landscape that has been altered by road construction. The site is protected and interpreted by the Kosrae Historic Preservation Office. Photo by the author.

Direct threats to landscapes stem from a variety of sources, including but not limited to overly intensive agriculture; erosion; neglect; commercial deforestation; clearing and filling of coastal mangrove forests; urbanization; and construction development projects. Indirect threats stem from the disintegration of traditional cultural relationships and practices that formerly maintained the landscapes, and the people's changing economic and cultural aspirations for the land.

The preservation and sustainability of landscapes for the purposes of food and materials production, supplying clean water, maintaining biodiversity, preventing environmental degradation and sustaining future heritage tourism are primary concerns of many local people, traditional leaders, and state and national government agencies. To help protect landscapes in the Freely Associated States, international financial and technical assistance has been provided by the U.S. Forest Service, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the Nature Conservancy, and the Asian Development bank.

In particular, the establishment of "protected areas" in combination with direct, long-term community input into planning and resource management was or is being undertaken in Pohnpei (Watershed and Municipalities); Kosrae (Utwa-Walung Conservation Area); the Marshall Islands (Jaluit Atoll Conservation Area); and Palau (Ngaremeduu Conservation Area and Ngerkewid Islands Wildlife Preserve). A protected area can be generally defined as:

> An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means.[7]

In the future, more such areas are likely to be established throughout the developing Pacific including Micronesia. In current theory,[8] for subsistence-based economies, protected areas that combine conservation with sustainable, locally controlled economic use are preferable to more traditional "parks." In conservation history, parks were often established by fiat and resulted in the removal of local settlements and prohibitions on using park resources.

Comparisons of these two different approaches in Fiji and the Solomon Islands show the practical value of the community based approach.[9] On Pohnpei, recent experience in the establishment of a forested watershed reserve by the state government is also instructive. Established in part to protect a diminishing watershed from the negative effects of planting *sakau* trees (a now popular cash crop used to produce a mildly narcotic beverage with deep roots in traditional culture), it was violently opposed by local communities and traditional leaders. They perceived it as a confiscation of their property and rights. The eventual resolution of the conflict was a long-term program of direct community participation in the planning and management of the Reserve and the development of alternative *sakau* planting schemes.

Bringing Historic and Landscape Preservation Together

Micronesians have created and maintained cultural landscapes for over 2,000 years. Their landscapes constitute home, heritage, and livelihood. They are strewn with thousands of traditional culture sites ranging from shell middens and abandoned taro pits to elevated stone pathways and megalithic residential complexes. Many of these sites play important roles in local history and traditional culture. This is in addition to the unique roles they play in defining the broader history and identity of Micronesian peoples.

Unfortunately, many of these sites are also lost, neglected, and in danger of destruction. Nor is it likely they will survive the demise of their associated landscapes that are being increasingly affected by the integration of Micronesia into the world economy. The establishment of formal parks that restrict land use and access for the purpose of preserving cultural resources, including cultural landscapes, does not seem to be a viable option at this time for most of Micronesia.

Community based landscape preservation initiatives in the Pacific currently focus on conserving biodiversity while accommodating the development of modern sustainable economies. The establishment of protected areas for these purposes may afford opportunities for participation by historic preservation offices.

In supporting these initiatives, historic preservation offices have much to offer:

- Organizational scheme for identifying and documenting cultural landscapes and their components (i.e., that used by NPS).
- Expertise in the identification and documentation of traditional and historic archeological sites and features that are associated with the landscapes.
- Access to previous archeological research documented by reports in the libraries of the historic preservation offices.
- Ability to propose limited archeological and ethnographic research projects funded by the HPF.

Of particular interest and benefit might be research into the historical ecology of the area that would help to explain the processes by which the natural landscape was transformed into a cultural landscape. This kind of research has been successfully undertaken in Polynesia by teams of archeologists and natural scientists.[10] In return for their contributions, historic preservation offices might enjoy some or all of the following benefits:

- Increased community recognition and support of their programs.
- Access to restricted community lands for the purposes of cultural resource inventory.
- Unified and possibly more efficient venue for historic preservation activities that now focus on individual dispersed sites rather than on groups of sites within a common cultural landscape.
- Regular preventive maintenance (e.g., clearing) of important cultural sites.
- Increased role in land-use planning and management, and more serious consideration for historic preservation by national and state governments.
- Recognition and support from regional and international environmental organizations.

Finally, in assisting with the establishment and maintenance of community based protected areas, historic preservation offices should be mindful of maintaining leadership roles in historic preservation when dealing with other agencies and outside organizations to enhance their stature and prospects for outside funding and assistance.

Notes

1 16 U.S.C. 470 Section 101(e)(6)(A).

2 Department of the Interior, National Park Service: "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation" in *Federal Register* 48:190 (1983) 44738-44740, and "The Secretary of the Interior's Historic Preservation Professional Qualification Standards" in *Federal Register* 62:119 (1997) 33708-33723.

3 Patrick Vinton Kirch, *On the Road of the Winds: An Archaeological History of the Pacific Islands before European Contact* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2000):59.

4 National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 30 Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes* by Linda F. McClelland, J. Timothy Keller, Genevieve P. Keller and Robert Z. Melnick. Department of the Interior.

5 W.C. Clarke and R.R. Thaman (eds.) *Agroforestry in the Pacific Islands: Systems forSustainability* (Tokyo, New York, Paris: United Nations University Press, c1993), 10. This book provides detailed descriptions of agroforestry in Micronesia and other Pacific regions.

6 Marjorie V.C. Falanruw, "People Pressure and Management of Limited Resources on Yap." In Jeffrey A. McNeely and Kenton R. Miller (eds.) *National Parks, Conservation, and Development: the Role of Protected Areas in Sustaining Society*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982), 351.

7 IUCN [World Conservation Union], *1997 United Nations List of Protected Areas* (Cambridge: IUCN, 1998):xiv.

8 Michael Wells and Katrina Brandon with Lee Hannah, *Peoples and Parks: Linking Protected Area Management with Local Communities* (Washington: The World Bank, The World Wildlife Fund, The U.S. Agency for International Development, 1992).

9 Annette Lees, "Lessons from the Pacific: Linking Traditional Ownership Development Needs and Protected Areas." In *PARKS* 4:1 (Gland: Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas, IUCN, 1994).

10 Patrick V. Kirch and Terry L. Hunt, eds. *Historical Ecology in the Pacific Islands: Prehistoric Environmental and Landscape Change* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1997).

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